

Fri., Sept. 8, 1972 '49

Warrants SEP 8 1972 Issued in Murders

Murder warrants have been obtained by Oakland police against Glenn Bailey, 32, of 9248 C St., Oakland, and Aaron Lee Owens, 28, of 445 South 9th St., Richmond.

Bailey is already in the Alameda County Jail awaiting trial for robbery while Owens is in the Contra Costa County Jail awaiting trial on narcotics violations and for being an ex-convict with a gun.

The warrants charge the two men with the slaying last May 13 of Marie Collins, 24, and Stanford Bryant, 42, at their Rockridge district apartment at 333 Florence Ave.

Murder Suspect Guilty Of Robbery, Assault

SEP 16 1972

Glenn Bailey, 30, of 9248 C St., who is charged with the death of his partner in a robbery, was convicted yesterday of nine felony counts of robbery and assault with a deadly weapon after a four-day trial in Alameda County Superior Court.

The jury which convicted Bailey did not know that the murder charge has been filed against Bailey.

Two masked men last March 30 held up some 30 employees at the Mc Kesson-Robbins pharmaceutical warehouse at 831 Castro St., making off with a valuable quantity of pure cocaine.

An eyewitness later identified Stanford Bryant, 42, of 333 Florence Ave., as one of the robbers. Bailey was charged eight days ago with murdering Bryant on May 13. But the jury was not told of the murder charge by Asst. Dist. Att. William A. McKinstry so as not to prejudice the case against Bailey.

During the trial, Bailey's wife testified that Bailey was at home with her on March 30, the day of the robbery. She said it was his birthday.

But the state produced evidence that in another court proceeding 12 years ago, Bailey told a judge his birthday was May 17, 1942.

A state fingerprinting expert also testified that Bailey's fingerprints were on a

container of masking tape used in the cocaine robbery.

Judge Harold B. Hove, who heard the case, set Oct. 6 for sentencing. Bailey could be sent to prison for from 10 years to life.

Police said that Bryant was murdered several days after he bought a \$7,000 car for a girl friend. They theorized that he was murdered because his gift might put police on his trail.

Bryant and Marie Collins, 24, were both murdered at 333 Florence Ave. Miss Collins, police said, was involved in narcotics traffic in Alameda County and was awaiting trial on narcotics charges when she was slain.

Pair to Stand Trial in May NOV 30 1972 Dual Slaying

Glenn Bailey, 30, who is charged with murdering an alleged partner in a pharmaceutical warehouse robbery and a 24-year-old woman, has been ordered to stand trial in Alameda County Superior Court.

Aaron Lee Owens, 28, of 445 South 9th St., Richmond, also charged with the pair's murder, also was bound over to stand trial by Municipal Court Judge Jacqueline Taber.

Both are scheduled to be arraigned Dec. 7 in Superior Court.

Bailey, of 9248 C St., and Owens are accused in the May 13 slaying of Marie Collins, 24, and Stanford Bryant, 42, in a Rockridge district apartment.

Police believe Bryant was Bailey's partner in the holdup of McKesson-Robbins warehouse at 831 Castro St. in which a valuable quantity of pure cocaine was taken.

Bailey was sentenced to 10 years to life in prison after his conviction Sept. 15 in Superior Court on nine felony counts of robbery and assault with a deadly weapon for his part in the warehouse robbery.

Both Bailey and Owens are held without bail.

2 Convicted Of Slaying Dope Sellers

MAR 7 1973

An Oakland man and a Sunnyvale companion have been convicted of first-degree murder in the shotgun and pistol deaths of accused narcotics dealer Marie Collins, 24, and Stanford Bryant, 42, in a house on a quiet Rockridge District street last May 13.

The jury verdict was returned to Superior Court Judge Alan Lindsay to cap a trial that started Jan. 30.

The convictions on the double counts were obtained by Deputy Dist. Atty. John Taylor against Glenn Bailey, 32, of 9248 C St., and Aaron Lee Owen, 29, of Sunnyvale.

Judge Lindsay set March 26 for sentence.

The murders occurred at 333 Florence Ave. Neighbors working in their yards saw two men in stocking masks run and jump into a white getaway car.

Bailey was a partner of Bryant. Mrs. Collins had been arrested and faced trial in a series of narcotics cases. Police ascribed the shootings, in which the life of a 2-year-old boy was threatened, to a grudge over narcotics deals.

Killer of Drug Seller Given 10 to Life

MAR 28 1973

Glen h Bailey, 32, convicted of slaying two narcotics dealers, has been sentenced to prison for 10-years to life. The term is to be served in addition to an earlier 10-year to life term for two armed holdups.

Bailey's codefendant in the murders, Aaron Lee Owen, 29, of Sunnyvale, is to be sentenced April 4.

They were found guilty of first degree murder in the shotgun-pistol deaths of Marie Collins, 24, and Stanford

Bryant, 42, last May 13 at 333 Florence Ave.

The slayings were ascribed by police to a grudge over narcotics deals. Mrs. Collins faced a series of charges on narcotics violations. She was on bail on several of the counts and was living in the house in the Rockridge District when slain with Bryant, who was a partner of Bailey's.

Superior Court Judge Alan A. Lindsay made Bailey's murder convictions — run concurrently but provided that both of them be consecutive to the armed robbery conviction.

Dope Feud Slayer Gets APR - 5 1973 Life Term

Aaron Lee Owen, 29, was sentenced yesterday to state prison for life for his part in the narcotics feud assassination of two accused dealers in a Rockridge District neighborhood last May 13.

Owen's companion, Glenn Bailey, 32, was sentenced to two life terms March 26 for the slayings of Marie Collins, 24, and Stanford Bryant, 42.

The victims died under a blast of shotgun and pistol fire at 333 Florence Ave.

Superior Court Judge Alan A. Lindsay, before whom the jury trial was held, denied motions for a new trial and probation. Owen was convicted in both deaths and with being armed and using a weapon, possessing a gun as an ex-convict and having a prior conviction.

Bailey's sentence was stacked upon an earlier conviction for the robbery of a pharmaceutical supply house in which a large amount of narcotics was stolen.

An innocent man's victory

By Del Lane
Tribune Staff Writer

MAR 5 1981

A former Alameda County prosecutor has won the freedom of the man he successfully tried for murder in 1973.

John Taylor, now an attorney in private practice at Lake Tahoe, was told in 1979 by a co-defendant of Aaron Lee Owens, that Owens, 37, was wrongfully convicted of helping murder two people in what appeared to be a grudge over drug transactions.

The co-defendant, Glenn Bailey, gave Taylor this information during a parole hearing and followed up with a letter last year to the Alameda County district attorney's office.

Bailey later supplied Taylor with the name of his actual accomplice and the names of

several other people who, he said, knew the identity of that man.

Taylor was redeputized, assigned an investigator and reopened the case.

On Wednesday, Don Whyte, an Alameda County deputy district attorney, appeared before the state Board of Prison Terms at San Quentin, told the board of the circumstances and asked that the case be returned to the original trial court for further consideration.

"I understand that a letter has been sent returning jurisdiction to Alameda County Superior Court," Whyte said Wednesday night. "When that arrives, I will ask the sheriff to remove Owens from San Quentin and take him

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before the original trial judge, Alan Lindsay."

At that point, Whyte said, he will recommend that the jury verdict be vacated and move that the charges be dismissed.

"I expect Owens to be free at the very latest by early next week," he said.

In his report to the prison terms board, Taylor said Owens was the victim of "several incredibly coincidental occurrences."

Among those, said Whyte, is the fact that police identification photos show a remarkable physical resemblance between Owens and the actual suspect, to the extent that "they could be twin brothers, almost."

Because of that resemblance, Whyte said, Owens was positively identified as one of the killers by a witness who "simply made an honest mistake."

The other coincidences, Whyte said, were contained in "a lot of small bits of circumstantial evidence."

He said Owens' case was further damaged by the fact that he did not testify in his own behalf at his trial, "which is unusual for an innocent man." But, Whyte said, Owens made that choice because he had once been convicted of possessing a sawed-off

shotgun — the same kind of weapon used to kill one of the victims.

The victims were Marie Collins, 24, and Stanford Bryant, 42, who were shot to death on May 13, 1972, in an apartment in Oakland's Rockridge district.

Owens was sentenced to life and Bailey sentenced to two life terms.

Whyte termed Owens' conviction a "one-in-a-million shot — I never expect to see it happen again."

And Taylor's of involvement in reopening the case, Whyte said, "A situation like this has never happened. At the time, Taylor had some misgivings about the case, nothing he could really put his finger on. After Bailey talked to him, he acted through a sense of moral responsibility."

As for Bailey's true accomplice, Whyte said, "We have the name of an individual, but the state of the evidence in the case is such that we will probably never be able to proceed against him."

Of Owens, Whyte said, "He has a remarkable attitude. He just accepted conviction for a crime he didn't commit as the way life is. I couldn't do that. I don't know why he didn't go crazy during all those years in prison."

Lawyer, wrongly convicted man crumble society's walls

By Kevin Fagan
Tribune staff writer

Bailey, Glenn

SUN APR 26 1992

THIS IS A TALE of opposites attracting, of justice hard won, and of a friendship that blossomed through the years despite all odds.

On one side is a comparatively rich white lawyer named John Taylor. On the other is a poor black man named Aaron Owens, whom Taylor put behind bars for life for a brutal shotgun double murder two decades ago.

Taylor was a hot prosecutor, the Alameda County district attorney's best. He nailed Owens easily, leaving no doubt in the jurors' minds with pinpoint witness descriptions and bloody evidence.

The only trouble was that Owens was innocent. And he almost died for the mistake.

Had the killings happened just months earlier, Owens probably would have been sentenced to choke in the gas chamber. But as fate would have it, the state Supreme Court overturned the death penalty

that year — 1972 — and Owens wound up instead doing a life term in San Quentin state prison.

That meant that nine long years later, when Taylor went to Owens' parole hearing to make sure the "murderer" wouldn't be freed, the then-convict was able to look Taylor straight in the face for the first time since his arrest. And Owens was able to say one simple thing he had never seriously told him: "I didn't do it."

"I said, 'Right — save it for the other cons,'" Taylor said recently in the Walnut Creek office where he now has a private law practice. "But then I looked in his eyes, and suddenly I could see he was telling the truth."

"And I thought, 'Oh, my God.' "

Thus began a legal roller coaster that resulted, two years later in 1981, in Taylor winning a courtroom fight to get Owens freed. And today, almost exactly 20 years after the messy May 13, 1972, drug-killing that sent them both on a collision

course with fate, they are fast friends.

They go to Oakland A's baseball games together. They share a beer now and then, or catch lunch on the lawn at some local park. They toy with writing a book about their lives, and Taylor helps Owens out whenever he needs a lawyer.

Owens, well-muscled and lean at the age of 49, still lives much as he did before: He rents a tiny apartment west of San Pablo Avenue on the tattered side of Berkeley, where he earns a small income caring for a quadriplegic woman.

And Taylor, a slimmer man of 50 who sports a neat, gray beard, lives as he always did, in a big house in the Eastbay hills, married to a local judge. He wants for little and picks and chooses legal cases from his sparkling Walnut Creek office.

But when the two get together, the walls of money, attitude and racism that would divide lesser men

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elt away.

"Hey, bro'," Taylor snapped king as Owens walked into his office on a recent warm afternoon — half an hour late, as often is. "You (wasting time) ain?"

Their eyes met, as clear and understanding as that day in Quentin when Owens cracked Taylor with the truth, and they both grinned widely.

"You're an ass . . . , and you ways were," Owens roared, clapping Taylor on the arm. "Good to see you, too."

You'd think that in all those prison years, Owens would have developed an insurmountable resentment against the man who put him away. But there's not a trace.

"I just figured he was a sharp lawyer doing what the system told him to," Owens said. "I hate having done time, and that conviction will haunt me the rest of my life, but John is not the one to blame."

"I prefer to think John is the one who got me out."

parallel thoughts

The irony of their friendship is not lost on them.

"Yeah, he's a rich man and I'm a poor man. But we're right here, close," Owens said, holding up both hands next to each other. "We don't need to be on the same side of life to understand each other."

Taylor added: "Aaron's a very personable, charming guy who lived on the wrong side of the law and got incredibly unlucky that once."

When asked to unreel their strange legal saga, the men finished sentences for each other. Having done the TV show rounds after Owens was freed, from "Good Morning America" to CBS News, they're well used to telling the story.

It began the day before Mother's Day 1972, when two men armed with a pistol and a shotgun surprised reputed heroin dealer Stan Bryant and his girlfriend, Suenette Cook, at their Rockridge home. With Bryant was Forrest Brown and his 4-year-old son.

After arguing about whether to kill all four, the gunmen let Brown and his son go, then shot Bryant and Cook to death.

One of the gunmen was drug dealer Glenn Bailey, who years later told a reporter he arranged the killings because Bryant "disrespected me." The other gunman, Brown and another witness later testified, was Aaron Owens.

"I was very comfortable with this case. I had good evidence and good witnesses, and I had no doubt Aaron did it," Taylor said. "Just goes to show you — it takes a good lawyer to convict a guilty man, but it takes a hell of a lawyer to convict an innocent man."

Proof of legal mistakes

When he was arrested, Owens figured the cops were just leaning on him because he'd beaten a few drug and robbery raps before. He'd been buying flowers for his wife and mother at the time of the murders, and felt sure he'd just draw some light sentence to teach him a lesson.

He believed that until a year later, when he got two life terms for first-degree murder.

Reflecting on the sentencing last week, after double-murderer Robert Alton Harris became the first California prisoner executed in 25 years, Taylor said he never would have asked for a death sentence.

"In a system where you have human beings involved, you're always going to have mistakes," he said. "I'm not going to argue for or against the death penalty on the whole, but let me just say this: Aaron is living proof that legal mistakes can be made."

Owens first went to Folsom prison, then San Quentin, and he appealed his case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Denied at every level, he thought it looked hopeless until the 1980 parole hearing where he met Taylor again.

Owens was denied parole that day, but as Taylor drove back to his plush Oakland hills home he couldn't scrub that epiphanic moment from his mind.

During the first trial, the two had exchanged a few words between proceedings, but it had been cursory at best. Owens never testified on the stand, afraid that evidence showing he had once owned a shotgun would damn him.

"Early on, during a recess, Aaron told me casually that he hadn't done it, but of course I thought he was full of it," Taylor

said. "We never had a serious moment until that parole hearing."

By then, he'd already had a belly full of 13 years as a DA's prosecutor and was scheduled to resign two days later. The thought that he would leave without a clean conscience cut him to the quick.

"I said to my wife when I got home, 'I don't think that guy did it,' and she said, 'Well, you'd better check it out,'" Taylor said. So he did. He immediately found resistance.

"The legal system hates to admit it made a mistake," he said recently with a sigh.

Lowell Jensen, who was then Alameda County District Attorney, told him to lay off, saying he was just feeling sentimental about the 35 murder cases he had so aggressively prosecuted for the county. Superior Court Judge Alan Lindsay, who tried the case, warned Taylor he was being led on.

Another year's work

Undaunted, Taylor started dredging up evidence, and the key came a year later when Owens' co-defendant, Bailey — who pleaded innocent but admitted the killings in prison — wrote him a letter, saying he would cooperate.

Bailey never implicated Owens in the trial, but now figured a new investigation might get him a new trial. The man who convinced him of that was Owens, who'd wrangled himself a San Quentin cell next to Bailey's so he could verbally work on him.

Taylor, by then a private attorney, got a witness in the getaway car to admit she'd lied to protect the real killers. Taylor also scared up another witness, and got photos of the true killer. It was eerie — Bailey's actual sidekick was a dead ringer for Owens: 5-foot-8 with the same features, right down to mutton-chop sideburns. That's why Brown, the man who was spared at the last minute, had mixed the two up.

DA Jensen was finally convinced and sent the case back to Judge Lindsay. On March 6, 1981, he threw out the convictions and Owens walked out a free man. He had been in county jail or state prison since November 1972.

Bailey is still doing life in San Quentin. The other killer, said Taylor and the DA's office, could never be prosecuted, because when they discredited their evidence to free Owens they discredited everything relating to the second killer.

"I remember to this day the moment John came to San Quentin and told me I was going to be a free man," Owens said. He stared straight-faced at Taylor, and a lone tear squeezed from one eye. "I just dropped to my knees and cried."

Taylor, in turn, said he has no regrets over having convicted Owens the first time.

"I was just doing my job," he said. "The important thing is I set it right later."

Owens' 78-year-old mother, Gladys, and his eight siblings have never forgiven Taylor for putting Owens in prison, despite his later efforts, which include defending him against two minor bum raps since being freed. Taylor's wife also takes a dim view of the two palling around together.

"It's OK," Taylor shrugged. "They don't understand, but we do," Owens added.

While he was behind bars, Owens' wife divorced him and his two daughters grew up. That, plus the toughening that comes from living in cement and steel, have left their mark.

"I still have trouble staying with anything for long — girlfriend, job, whatever," Owens said. "And when it feels like I'm losing it, John can tell."

"He just says, 'Don't . . . me, man,' and he keeps me on the straight and narrow. And I respect him because I know his concern is genuine."

Owens in turn showers unmitigated affection on his buddy. When Taylor barely lived through a hideous Oakland car crash three years ago that cost him an eye and left him with a slight speech slur, Owens "prayed every day for him." And when Taylor determinedly went back to work a year later, Owens urged him on, telling him to hang tough.

"It was only because John was such a caring man that I got out of prison," Owens said, voice cracking as Taylor looked away with an embarrassed smile. "I owe him my life."

"I love the man."